

of the differentiation of the whole into an infinite plurality of correlated centers called individuals, effects of nature.<sup>17</sup> As such, the relationship between the particular consciousness and the universal one is akin to that between air in the atmosphere and air in our lungs. Therefore, in Yoga, there is no prayer: there are only techniques towards self-realization;<sup>18</sup> yogic exercises are meant to excite and awaken the latent, inner powers; as such there can be no compatibility between yogic meditation and Biblical contemplation.

Contrary to the yogic world, contingency plays an important role in the prayer-favoring framework; for, it not only distinguishes God from man in essence, but also positions man in the state of urgency and need; God never prays to man, but man is expected to pray to God. This is absent in both polytheistic and monist religions, where any individual has potential to acquire supreme status. Regarding yoga as physical exercises, chiefly what Surendranath Dasgupta<sup>19</sup> has referred to as “the science of breath” and its developed form of *pranayama* (“a system of breath control”), the value of the techniques depends on, first, the theological validity of the system (since yoga

has been adopted by several systems, ascetic, occultic, etc)<sup>20</sup> that gives them meaning – and there can be no meaning without a reference frame, then on the purpose or end pursued that defines their virtue.

## *Eternal Priesthood*

The significance of Christ's Incarnation is paramount to an understanding of the possibility and effectualness of prayer. His eternal and mediatory priesthood is the ultimate foundation of prayer. Therefore, the New Testament prescribes all prayer to be

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done in the Name of Jesus Christ (Jn.14:13,14; 16:23,24,26). The essence of this truth is captured in the declaration of Christ Himself: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Jn.14:6). This understanding is important since the statement is trans-temporal, it applies to both Pre-Fall and Post-Fall situations alike. There was never that Christ was not the way. He did not become the way. He eternally exists as the

way, the truth, and the life – the eternal “I am”, immutable and absolute. Through Him were the worlds created, and for Him (Col.1:15). All things begin in Him and return to Him, who is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End (Rev.1:11), in Him will the worlds merge and consummate (Eph.1:10) – the segregate, aggregating into eternal damnation and infernal death.<sup>21</sup> This

<sup>17</sup> Theos Bernard, *Hindu Philosophy* (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 2003), p. 109

<sup>18</sup> Yoga does have place for a belief in God, contrary to the atheistic stance of Samkhya. However, the God of Yoga is like the Demiurge of Plato; he acts as the impetus of the evolution of *prakriti* (the material aspect of the world) while also thought as helping his devotees find release from empirical bondages through their practice of yoga. See M. Hiriyanna, *Indian Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993), pp. 282-283

<sup>19</sup> *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I. (Cambridge, 1922), p.227. Project Gutenberg [EBook #12956], Release Date, July 20, 2004. Gutenberg.net

<sup>20</sup> R. R. Maharaj records horrific and painful, demonizing effects of yoga in his autobiography *Death of a Guru*, R. R. Maharaj with Dave Hunt (NY: A. J. Holman Company, 1977)

<sup>21</sup> Notice it doesn't say “which are under the earth”, but only “which are in heaven, and which are on earth in Him”, thereby excluding all things that are separate from Him forever

exclusivity will explain why prayers by any person or group throughout history (past, present, future), irrespective of creed or culture, are either answered or rejected: the criterion is whether the prayer responds in answer to the work of the Spirit of Christ or not. Everything else is fleshly and transgressional. The prayer in spirit and in truth can only be such as responds to the Spirit of grace (which is of Christ – Jn.1:17; Heb.10:29) striving with, testifying to, and drawing one to the Father; for the Spirit also intercedes for us (Gen.6:3; 1Pet.3:18-20; Jn.12:32; 17:8-10; 1Cor.12:3; Heb.3:7; 4:2; 1Cor.10:4; 1Pet.1:11; Rom.8:26). That was the reason why Cain's sacrifice was rejected while Abel's was accepted. Cain's was not patterned after the law of faith of the revelation of the Spirit of Christ (Heb.11:4; Gen.4:7). John says that Cain's works were evil while his brother's were righteous (1Jn.3:12), which means that it was not the works in themselves but the disposition of faith by which they were performed that established them as righteous or evil – Abel was, therefore, justified and declared righteous (Heb.11:4) – all this connects with the Biblical aphorisms in James: "the prayer of faith shall save the sick" and "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas.5:15,16). Christ alone is the eternal source and end of all saving faith; for He alone is the essential revelation of God – He is the way, the truth, and the life (Heb.12:2; Rev.22:12-14,17-20).

In the Incarnation and Passion of Christ the chasm between the eternal and the temporal qualities of being or existence is infinitely and immutably bridged<sup>22</sup> forever. However, it must be understood that the two were never poles – never polarized. The eternal quality has no rival pole and so is itself not a pole: it spans infinity. The eternal, in fact, contains the temporal in the sense of the Cretan

aphorism "In Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28), meaning that the both are not two distinctly equivalent and individual ends; only the eternal is self-contained, temporality is contained in and relative to it, though infinitely distinct from it: this infinite distinctive constitutes the chasm we talked about. They are different, but they are not poles – this is the difference. The dualism is not dialectical (as in Taoism or Process philosophy); for that would circumscribe each and eternity would be an impossible category. The dualism is only relative, as between the necessary and the contingent. The world is contingent upon God. In the Incarnation, then, eternity and temporality are bridged in the sense that the



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contingent world is embraced in the being of Christ, the Son of God, in an essential connection – He became Man; yet the nature of the contingent and the nature of the absolute are unmixed in His person. This, says the writer of Hebrews, qualifies Christ for His everlasting and immutable priesthood. Now, there are two everlasting orders of Biblical priesthood established by God; the first is Melchizedekian (Ps.110:4; Gen.14:18, 20; Heb.5:6; 6:20; 7:21), established by divine oath, and the second is Aaronic (Exod.40:15; Num.25:13), established by divine covenant. The Melchizedekian order is general and eternal, whereas the Aaronic order is national and temporal; the Melchizedekian order has no origins in time nor geographical or cultural

<sup>22</sup> The Latin word for "priest" is *pontifex* and means "bridge builder" – incorrectly applied to the Pope as *Pontifex Maximus*, meaning the High Priest.

specifications while Aaronic priesthood had such. Some understand Melchizedek to be a Christophany of the Old Testament. This is a plausible conjecture seeing that only one High Priest is ever mentioned in that order and the Hebrew word *dibrah* for “order” used in Psalm 110:4 may also mean “word”, as

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indicated by John Gill, or be taken as *dabar*, meaning “word” (without the later scribal additions of vowels), as a Messianic Jewish pastor had once indicated, interpreting the text to say “Upon My word, O Melchizedek, You are a priest forever” in the eternal establishment (notice it affirms “You are”, not “You shall be”)– thus, showing that the Melchizedek addressed here is Christ Himself.<sup>23</sup> Also, if the order is established by God rather than being merely recognized by Him as such, then the history of the establishment could only first be seen in Psalm 110:4, which was spoken with regard to Christ in eternity. Scripturally, the eternal priesthood belongs to Christ alone, which is neither continued nor taken from anyone but is exclusively His eternally; therefore, He is also called the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev.13:8), and in light of this can be understood all those prophetic scriptures that signify the sufferings

of Christ, even as it is said regarding the prophets, “the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow” (1Pet.1:11): all this pointing to the fact of how eternity and temporality are summed up in the core of Christ’s incarnate being; therefore, His one offering annuls infinite condemnation once for all, and the effects of His atonement apply trans-historically to both the Old and the New Testament believers alike. This explains also why and how prayers in the general order (apart from the Law) are accepted before God without any demand of sacrifice for sins, because the Way is eternally rent open in the sacrifice of His flesh, being available to all who approach God in brokenness and faith. The historical manifestation of Christ in flesh, consequently, constitutes the mystery of God’s will regarding man – which is, godliness (1Pet.1:20; 1Tim.3:16). To sum this up, the eternal priesthood of Christ is the foundation of the possibility and expectancy of prayer. It is only in Him (relation), by Him (foundation), through Him (mediation), and for Him (intention) that all prayer has any meaning; we are only accepted in Him (Eph.1:6; Heb.10:19,20). This is the mystery of eternal godliness.

### The Altar

*“Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne” (Rev.8:3, NKJV).*

The Bible is a book of altars; it is a book of prayers. The first altar was built by God and He never needed a second one; the earthly were mere copies and shadows of the eternal (Rev.13:8; 1Pet.1:20;<sup>24</sup> Gen.3:21; Ex.25:6;

<sup>23</sup> In one of the few *Tishrei Journals*, published in India by Maranatha Revival Crusade, Secunderabad, in the 90s

<sup>24</sup> The word *proginosko* for “foreordained”, used in this verse, actually means “known before hand”.